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No. 473.

Mr. Maynard to Mr. Evarts.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,

Constantinople, October 13, 1879. (Received November 8.)

No. 348.] SIR: I had the honor in my dispatch No. 341, of September 12, 1879, to mention the absence of Her Britannic Majesty's ambassador on a trip to Syria and the Holy Land.

After an absence of a month he returned early this morning, stopping at the summer palace of the embassy on the Upper Bosphorous. I have not yet seen him, but I understand he and his suite came back in robust health.

Reports of the journey have been published in the city papers, of which I inclose a selection.

The United States consuls at Beirut and Jerusalem have addressed communications to the consul-general on the same topic, the substance of which is transcribed for inclosure. The impression made upon these officials will appear to be dissimilar.

I have, &c.,

HORACE MAYNARD.

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[Inclosure 1 in No. 348.]

Press accounts of Her Britannic Majesty's ambassador's movements.

DAMASCUS, September 28.

SIR HENRY LAYARD AT DAMASCUS.

It was on Tuesday morning, the 23d of September, that Sir Henry Layard, accompanied by Lady Layard, Miss Dueane, Sir Alfred Sandison, and Mr. Nicholson, landed at Beirut from the Antelope. The weather was fortunately moderate, and the travelers escaped those discomforts which attend the process of embarking and disembarking at the ports of the Syrian coast, when a fresh breeze drives the sea shorewards in heavy rollers weighted with the sweep of the whole Mediterranean. On the arrival of the Antelope in port, Mr. Consul-General Eldridge, with the civil and military governors of Beirut, and to represent Midhat Pasha, Wasif Effendi, political agent of the *vilayet*, and several notables of the town, went on board to welcome the ambassador. At the landing-place there was a great demonstration; all the population, native and European, turned out to show honor to the distinguished visitors, and the clergy of all denominations, in their robes of varied tints and texture, made an imposing show, as, drawn up along the quay with their train of acolytes, they hymned Sir Henry with highly satisfactory

enthusiasm. Carriages were in waiting to convey the party to the magnificent house which had been prepared for their reception, and as soon as the ambassador had slightly rested, his excellency held a levee, receiving the members of the British colony, the consular body, the leading members of foreign society, the civil and military authorities, and the heads of the native communities supported by their clergy, who, as you are no doubt aware, are not only more numerous, but also play a more prominent part in Syria than in almost any other place in the world.

The journey to Damascus was accomplished under the most favorable conditions, and after having been received by the civil governor of Damascus, Ibrahim Pasha, at the half-way halt of Stora, he, in the afternoon, shook hands with His Highness Midhat Pasha, who met his excellency in the house at Dumar, which was once upon a time the summer abode of Abdel Kader. Mr. Jago, our most worthy consul, was there too, and of course representatives of all creeds and nationalities, with their bishops, priests, and deacons. The entry into Damascus was one of the grandest spectacles that that ancient city has beheld for many a long year. The troops lined the streets, the gendarmerie served as a guard of honor, bands of music played everywhere, banners waved majestically over arches of ever-greens, and the whole population thronged out in its best attire to show its sympathy with the coming guests.

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At dinner Sir Henry Layard proposed the health of the Sultan in the following terms:

"I beg to propose a toast to the health of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan. As His Majesty has deigned to honor me with his friendship, I have had frequent opportunities of appreciating his intelligence, his feeling of sympathy for his subjects, without distinction of race or creed, his earnest desire for the welfare, prosperity, and happiness of his empire, and his true patriotism. His Majesty takes a lively interest in all that concerns his country, and I can say that no ruler is more fully penetrated with a sense of his duty, or devotes himself with greater assiduity to public affairs.

"I shall have an opportunity on my return, and I shall not fail to take advantage of it, to express to His Majesty the satisfaction I have felt in witnessing the progress which Syria is now making. The friendship of England for Turkey is well known; a friendship which has lasted for more than two centuries. We can attribute the interest and the sympathy which the English people feel in the prosperity of this great empire to several reasons. To a certain extent England herself is a Mahomedan power. Among the subjects of the Queen, my august sovereign, are many millions of Mussulmans. I can assure you that they enjoy the most perfect liberty, and are on a footing of perfect equality with their fellow-subjects. We do all that lies in our power to promote their welfare; we respect, as is but right, their religion, and they fill some of the highest posts in our administration. These privileges we ask for the subjects of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan. We wish that all his subjects, Mussulmans and Christians, should be equal in the eye of the law, and that they should be governed with justice.

"This great principle has been constantly maintained by the eminent statesman to whom His Majesty has confided the government of Syria. I congratulate you on the fortunate and happy selection which His Majesty made, and I feel convinced that Midhat Pasha, by his untiring energy, by his spirit of justice, and by his conciliatory disposition, will raise this beautiful province to the rank of one of the most flourishing and the most important in the Ottoman Empire.

"I must convey my warmest thanks to his highness as well as to the town of Damascus, to her notables, and to her whole population, for the cordial and hospitable welcome they have been kind enough to give me. I shall forever retain a most pleasing recollection of my visit, and I shall deem myself fortunate if I am able to show my gratitude in furthering, [[Page 992](#)] in however slight a degree, the interests of this noble and ancient city."

The speech was received with loud and enthusiastic cheers, which were prolonged and taken up by the crowd outside as soon as the motive was understood. The whole town was ablaze with illuminations, and the population felt that they were welcoming the representative of the one power that disinterestedly seeks to promote the welfare indiscriminately of all the

ances and creeds that were represented in that joyful and enthusiastic throng. Saturday was spent in leave-taking, and on Sunday morning the illustrious party took their departure, leaving upon the popular mind a most pleasant, and, let it be hoped, not unprofitable, impression.

[Inclosure 2 in No. 348.]

Mr. Edgar to Mr. Heap.

UNITED STATES CONSULATE,
Beirût , September 30, 1879.

SIR:

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I have had no reason to suspect that the visit of Sir A. H. Layard to Syria had any other object than relaxation, &c. The English residents in Beirut, particularly the English consul-general, affirm that his visit is one of pleasure only. He arrived at Beirut from Jerusalem Tuesday, September 23, and was officially received and escorted to a residence specially prepared for him by the British consul-general, and representatives of the governors-general of Syria and the Lebanon, the governor of Beirut, and the municipality. The British consul-general on Monday, September 22, in an official circular informed his colleagues of the expected arrival, and on Tuesday in another circular indicated the hour at which the ambassador would be pleased to receive those consuls who would do him the honor to call upon him. In my interview with him he spoke very pleasantly of those Americans with whom he became acquainted when here in 1839, mentioning all by name, and said that he had never in his life met with more energetic, disinterested, and self-sacrificing men. After the reception of the consuls he received the resident British merchants, headed by James Black, whom he had known in 1839.

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The municipality provided an extensive dinner for the ambassador and his suite Tuesday evening, to which no foreigners except the British consul-general and the vice-consul and their wives were invited. The ambassador and suite left at four o'clock Wednesday morning for Damascus. He was met half way by an escort sent from Damascus. He displayed the English flag while traveling. He remained three days in Damascus, went to Baalbec, and will arrive in Aleih, a village in the Lebanon, the summer residence of the British consul-general and many Europeans and Americans, to-day at 4 p.m. He will to-morrow visit the governor-general of the Lebanon at Beited-din, returning to Beriut the last of this week. From Beriut he will go to Tripoli, thence to Constantinople. His visit has caused much excitement and a great deal of absurd speculation about British occupation, interference, supervision of reforms, &c. In my interview with him he spoke very highly of our minister, and inquired of me about his visit to the Black Sea. * * *

I am, &c.,

JOHN T. EDGAR, *Consul.*

[Inclosure 3 in No. 348.]

Mr. Willson to Mr. Heap.

UNITED STATES CONSULATE,

Jerusalem, Palestine , October 1, 1879.

SIR: * * * * *

The ambassador returned the official call of the consul, dined with the governor, Raouf Pacha, and heard the complaints and statements of grievance of various parties—patriarchs, bishops, superiors of convents—and the representation of the late Bishop Gobat, and all of them, so far as I can learn, were gratified with the results of their visits; but *outside* of Turkish official circles nothing is known definitely of the special object of his visit.

That it was a pleasure trip for relaxation is an idea not to be entertained for a moment. He appeared to be in perfect health, and he worked very hard, journeying rapidly and dispatching business of ceremony promptly. My own impression is that the visit had some reference to proposed reforms—some reference, perhaps, to English influence in Syria and Palestine, of which the French and Russian consuls are jealous, not to say also the German consul.

If I were asked my private opinion, I should say that the Beaconsfield administration, in view of approaching [Page 993] elections, seeing the restlessness of the English people on account of the delay of proposed reforms in Turkey, have sent Sir Henry Layard abroad on a jaunting expedition to have means to show on the hustings and in the papers that something is doing, or is going to be done, sooner or later, and that the ambassador and the premier and the secretary for foreign affairs are wide awake on the subject.

In other words, it was a grand “spectacular demonstration.” Should any further light break from the “dark cloud,” it will be reported to you promptly.

I have, &c.,

J. G. WILLSON, *Consul*.